Text on Practice

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My most recent piece of work "do humans dream of sheep" is a diaristic short film about my own struggle with the feeling of being stuck in a loop. Shot on my iPhone with an anamorphic lens adapter it shows these struggles through a series of daunting scenes building up to a point of relief where the imagery changes and visually describes these moments of relief, just to be thrown back into the main characters loop. The idea for this project originated from thoughts on concepts of free will and freedom as well as our part in society as an individual. The title "do humans dream of sheep" is a play on the name "do androids dream of electric sheep", from Philip K. Dick (1968), and the thoughts of being programmed and stuck in a life, commanded by others and robbed of our free will by the shackles of society, brought up by the book and the movie adaption "Blade Runner" (Ridley Scott, 1982).

Working on this short film project I adapted a way of working that could be compared to the act of scrapbooking, me going out with my phone to capture whatever caught my eyes and thoughts, filming whatever and seeing what fits, what feelings the material evokes, afterwards. If it doesn't work out I would just scrap it go out and do it differently. This approach to shooting helped me develop the project without being shackled by a script or definite idea but rather developing the story from filming, experimenting and sculpting as I went along.
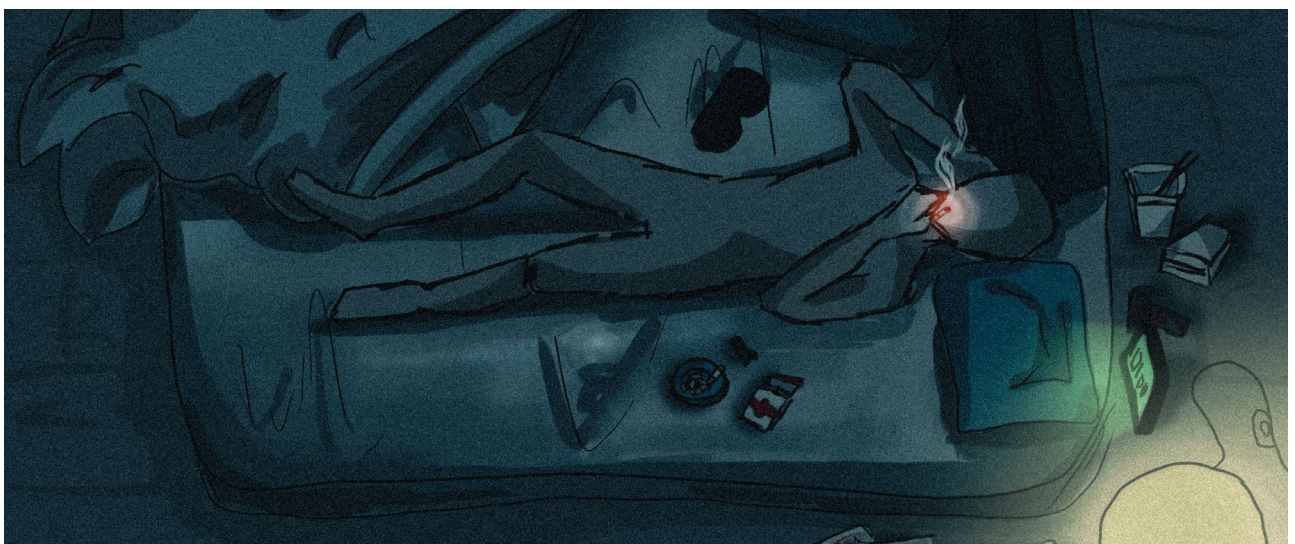

With my current project "Hey, how are you?" I depict the emotions and struggles related to addiction and societal issues, regarding work ethics and the pressure felt to be caused by society. The viewer follows the life of a man in his late 20s, early 30s, working a corporate job every day, just to be able to pay his rent for a small room on the outskirts of the city. His days consist of work and constantly dreaming about escaping this reality. One night after work, waiting for his tram, he spots an advertisement for a virtual world, named WNDRLST (pronounced "Wanderlust") and gets intrigued by the promises of escaping into another world.

Not long after his first dive into the VR world, where he meets Amy, a beautiful, intelligent, charismatic, outgoing and flawless women, his real life starts spiralling out of control, whilst he gets lost in the ideas of the virtual world. He instantly falls in love with Amy without even knowing who or what she actually is. It is not important to him what or who she is, it is about the idea of what she stands for. He quickly gets addicted to the feelings of escapism, freedom and happiness, he experiences when spending time in the virtual world, compared to the daunting reality of his real life in the real world.

Contrary to my last project this one needed a different approach when it comes to conceptualising and developing the story, world, characters and short film in itself. I noticed early on that my previous approach of run'n'gun filmmaking combined with the scrapbook approach to editing and putting it all together where not gonna work out with a more traditional narrative short movie/story. With use of the rough outlines of the basic screenplay format I am writing the story and script of my movie in a more visual descriptive, rough and on the fly, whenever and wherever I have an idea for a scene or sequence kind of wayw, that works better with my approach to visual storytelling. Using the actual real world buildings, streets and surroundings of the city of Rotterdam and a (at the moment unknown) beach location I am planning to shoot this movie in a kind of guerrilla and improvisational way of filmmaking together with a small cast and crew, consisting of the two actors, a co-Director, Art Director/Production Designer and Assistant.

Both, my most recent and current work, deal with mental and societal issues linked with the status quo our society implements and imprints on oneself. They are both rather personal topics I can relate to in some ways and feel like a lot of people in our modern day society can. Escapism, romanticisation, nostalgia, the seeking out to have that feeling you used to have.
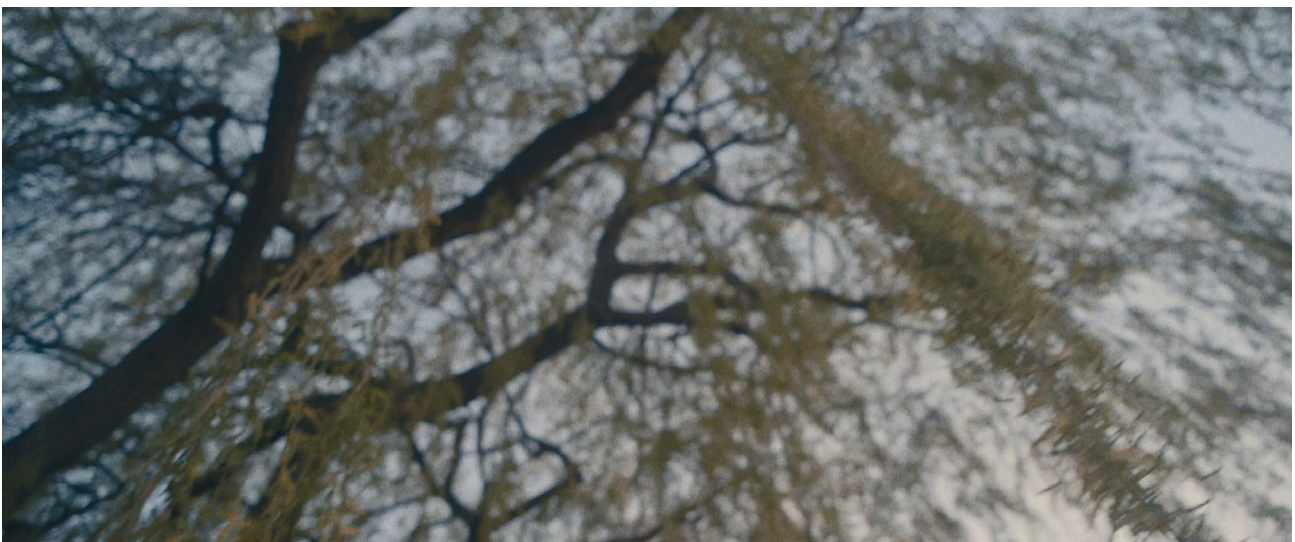
Even though both of them are short film projects the scope of them differs as well as the type of film and approach to storytelling. With my current project I am trying to tell a story through traditional means of cinema and cinematography, compared to my most recent work, where the main character was the camera and the story told through a voiceover. Next to the obvious technological differences from shooting on an iPhone to shooting on a cinema camera, a lot of other parts of my process with developing the movie differ from my previous project. Even though I still work through experimenting and figuring stuff out on the way, I am a lot more meticulous with crafting the story and feeling of my current project beforehand rather than trying to find parts of its meaning later on during the process.

In the future I would like to further experiment with different forms and methods of visual storytelling through images, moving images and sound and how using different tools and methods can shape, change and determine the look and feel of a project and therefore talk to the viewer on a deeper level in different ways. I am strongly focusing on the photography part of moviemaking and storytelling as this is where my interests and ambitions to be a director of photography lie. Therefore I would further more like to experiment with different tools in the realm of cameras and mediums but also different ways of lighting, moving the camera and making the camera part of a movie and how all of this and more affects the viewer and outcome of a project. Most importantly I want to keep making work and projects that have a meaning to them and can influence people, show them my views and possibly show them theirs.

I can get inspired by a lot of different things, first and farmost I draw a lot of inspiration from movies, tv shows and all other types of media that I consume, either regarding filmmaking or photography. Often I get inspired by parts of the cinematography in a movie or show, as in techniques, tools, equipment that was used, framing, camera movement and a lot of the times lighting and then start digging into why and how it was used/created, in that specific instance, and how I might be able to use something along the lines in my own work in the future.

For making my last short film "do humans dream of sheep" a huge inspiration when it came to getting started with shooting and how to go about approaching and doing something like this where the creators and filmmakers Casey Neistat and Dan Mace, who both work primarily with video and have a very pragmatic approach to filmmaking as in: "better go out and produce something shitty than staying on your couch and doing nothing productive at all". As previously stated I work primarily with visual storytelling and therefore am often inspired by what is around me, visually, sounds, what ever happens wherever I am around me and this pragmatic approach of just going out and filming something for the purpose of being productive and starting to do something mixed quite well for the sake of this project and helped me find my voice when it came to the visual part quite well.

For my current project, "Hey, how are you?", a few of the more tangible inspirations where movies like "Ghost in the shell" (1995), "Fallen Angels" (1995), "Chungking Express" (1994), "The Place Beyond the Pines" (2012), "Son of Saul" (2015) and shows like "Shameless"(2011-2021), Netflix's "Altered Carbon" (2018) and Amazon Primes "Upload" (2020). Some of these speak to me on more of a visual layer, I.E. "Son of Saul" and the way the aspect ratio, framing and camera work is used, where as others like "Upload" and "Fallen Angels" influence me on another, more storytelling and character building focused level. In general the directing and filmmaking style of director Wong Kar-Wai is a great inspiration to me, with his approach to storytelling, character- and world building, as well as script writing.

List of references:

Dick, K. Philip (1968) Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, New York: Ballantine Books. First published in Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd, Norstrilla Press.

Blade Runner (1982), directed by Ridley Scott. [theatrical release] Warner Bros. (United States)

Chungking Express (1994), directed by Wong Kar-Wai. [theatrical release] Jet Tone Production (Hong Kong)

Ghost in the shell (1995) directed by Mamoru Oshii. [theatrical release] Production I.G., Bandai Visual Company, Manga Entertainment (Japan, UK)

Fallen Angels (1995), directed by Wong Kar-Wai. [theatrical release] Block 2 Pictures, Chan Ye-Cheng, Jet Tone Productions (Hong Kong)

Shameless (2011-2021), developed for American television by Paul Abbott and John Wells. [TV broadcasting release] Bonanza Productions, John Wells Productions, Warner Bros. Television, Showtime Networks, Sterling Films (V) (United States)

The Place Beyond the Pines (2012) directed by Derek Cianfrance. [theatrical release] Electric City Entertainment, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, Verisimilitude (United States)

Son of Saul (2015) directed by László Nemes. [theatrical release] Laocoon Filmgroup, Hungarian National Film Fund (Hungary)

Altered Carbon (2018-2020) developed by Late Kalogridis. [streaming on demand release] Mythology Entertainment, Skydance Television (United States)

Upload (2020-) developed by Greg Daniels. [streaming on demand release] 3 Arts Entertainment, Amazon studios, Reunion Pacific Entertainment (United States)